

February 1, 1974

Professor Gershom Scholem  
Chairman  
The Rothchild Prizes Organization in Israel  
1 King David Avenue  
Tel-Aviv 64953 ISRAEL

Dear Dr. Scholem,

I am responding to your letter dated January 10th which arrived here on the 21st relative to the recommendations for a Rothchild Prize in the Biological Sciences. It would take the wisdom of Solomon to choose strictly on the basis of scientific merit between the works of these two men. They are both of the highest caliber and certainly Israel can be proud equally of both of them. Sachs' current work on the alteration of cell surfaces in connection with the cancer change is attracting attention throughout the world. This is reflected in many of his papers but I recall particularly item #148 in the bibliography that you sent to me. He has had a number of colleagues working with him through the years on this and closely related problems, and there can be no question of his personal role in this line of research regardless of the names of coworkers who have collaborated with him. Professor Feldman is also globally recognized for his studies on the cellular basis of immunity. Paper #101 and #105 are representative of these contributions. I would have little doubt that within a short passage of years both of these men would qualify as representing Israel's outstanding biologists. This somewhat mitigates the complexity of my task since I respond in the spirit that it is only a question of relative timing.

In the circumstances the best advice that I can give you is perhaps meta-scientific rather than directed to the merits of their actual research. Feldman is, I believe, already very well known to the literate public in Israel in consequence of his outstanding activities in public education and in educational administration in addition to his laboratory work. Sachs has spent more time traveling to different laboratories in countries outside of Israel and may be slightly better known to the international community, but I believe that his name is relatively unknown within Israel. To the extent that an award of the Rothchild Prize has among its consequences some further public recognition within the nation, there may be some argument for a restoration of parity in that context by an earlier award to Sachs. However, you may be able to find better judgments about the validity of these premises than I can offer and if I am mistaken then obviously my conclusions must fail.

I do not believe that my efforts deserve the referral fee mentioned in your post-script but I would be quite happy if the sum mentioned were credited directly to the account of the war casualty fund of the Weizmann Institute.

P.S. Marguerite and I were sorry to have missed you during your somewhat recent visit to this area but hope we may have a chance to rectify a lost opportunity. Our plans for revisiting Israel are momentarily tempered by a forthcoming expected event (early May) but perhaps by some months after that a larger number of us may have the opportunity of visiting you again in Jerusalem.

I have to say that I have also been delighted to have the close connection here with both Elkanas during their visit to California.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr